TL1442

INDONESIA PUBLICATIONS
INDONESIA NEWS SERVICE
7538 Newberry Lane, Lanham-Seabrook, Maryland 20706, USA
Phone: (301) 552-3251 Fax: (301) 552-4465
E-mail: apakabar (PeaceNet) or 72436.3621 (CompuServe)

No. 286-288 April 3, 1991

This is Contributing Editor Nancy Lutz's translation of Chapter 4 of the Gadjah Mada University (UGM) Center for the Study of Rural and Regional Development's (P3PK) final report on an investigation it conducted in East Timor in late 1989 and early 1990. The study appeared in Indonesian in 1990 as **A Socio-Anthropological Study of East Timorese Society**. Previous translations from this study have appeared in **Indonesia News Service** Nos. 278 through 281 inclusive. The provision of Chapter 4 here, in conjunction with the earlier issues, yields an almost complete translation of the entire UGM P3PK report. Again, instead of presenting the translation in three of our standard six-page issues, we present it here in its entirety in a single triple issue. Parentheses () appear in the original document, while brackets [] represent translator clarifying insertions.

## A SOCIO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF EAST TIMORESE SOCIETY: SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE

### 4.1 Introduction

The social structure of village society in East Timor is composed of three systems which are each linked to one another. These systems are religion, the administrative system or political organization, and the sociocultural system. The first two systems, i.e., religion and the administrative system, each have two sides, a traditional side and a modern side.

Traditionally, East Timorese village society was composed of four strata, i.e., am nal in the Mambai language or dassi in the Tetum language, or the class made up of the king [raja] and his relatives; dato, or the nobility; reino, or the class of free persons; and (formerly) the ornasa or ata, which was the class of un-free persons or slaves [budak]. The relations between the king and nobility and the masses, or populacao, were paternalistic. Which is to say, the ideas and behaviors of the first two classes formed the pattern for the other classes, or in other words, the first two classes were idealized for the other groups. In connection with this, working for the interests of the am nal, such as helping to till their fields, was not seen as oppressive but rather as something natural. The census report made by the church for the city of Dili in 1856 stated the following. Of the 3,107 people who made up the total population of the city of Dili, 1,511 (50%) were free persons, 556 (18%) were slaves who were Christians, and 970 (32%) were still "heathens" ["kafir"]. 1

**4.2 Traditional Political Organization**

The traditional political organization in East Timor was headed by the liurai, who administered a territory or kingdom or suco. As ruler [raja], the liurai had extensive authority. Besides governing and acting as the administrator of the law, he also had the authority to distribute economic resources, especially land. The authority of the liurai was further strengthened by the fact that they also had the charisma [sic] to mobilize the labor of their subjects for public service (servico hamutuc) or to work on their own lands. Although their authority was taken away by the Portuguese government after the rebellions of 1911-1912, the fact is that to this day, they still possess a strong charisma [sic], as the bestower and holder of legitimacy in adat matters, and as a symbol of the wholeness and integrity of society.

Besides the liurai, there are still other traditional leaders whose "area" of authority is smaller, but who have a very important role, such as the umapukun (the adat leader) and the katuas. The umapukun, in its true sense, is a person, usually the oldest child in a kinship group, who was designated by his parents to guard the umalulik and to preserve the inheritance of his ancestors, whether in the form of objects, traditions, customs, or ideas. Specifically, he has the following duties and authority:

1. To guard the sacredness of the umalulik;
2. To settle questions of birth, marriage, divorce, and death;
3. To determine and carry out legal sanctions for various infractions, such as murder, theft, insults, and so on;
4. To participate in selecting and inaugurating the liurai;
5. To lead adat ceremonies, such as rainmaking, preventing misfortune, warding off disasters, opening new land, housebuilding, and harvest;
6. To select the cheve de suco and the cheve de povoacao.

Given the breadth of his authority, the umapukun performs a function of checks and balances [sic] towards the authority of the liurai, since behind his complex duties and role, he is believed to possess supernatural powers, as was indicated in point no. 5 above.

Another traditional leader is the katuas, 2 the oldest member of an uma or clan. Although the katuas do not always have a clear status or role like the liurai or the umapukun, their existence nevertheless has an important meaning for the village society of East Timor. Before resolving important problems, both the liurai and the umapukun usually ask the advice of all the katuas who are close to them. Thus, after a case is decided, no one will dare to take issue with it.

The principal difference between the liurai and the umapukun and katuas is that the liurai has the authority to divide up or distribute land, while the others do not. Even so, the umapukun's role as the upholder of adat gives him a kind of authority which the liurai does not have.

The nature of relations between the liurai and umapukun and the other members of society is that of patron-client [sic]. Members of society are bound to the liurai and umapukun by both ethnic and kinship ties. It is not easy for a person to move to another area outside of his ethnic group

or to extricate himself from his relatives. The liurai is the determiner of policy in his territory. With various kinds of support and facilities from the Portuguese government, the liurai had extensive authority, besides having extensive fields, the majority of livestock, direct connections to the market, and a say in determining market prices. 3 The great authority possessed by the liurai came about because originally his function was that of military commander. He had the obligation to defend his adat territory and to be the ruler of the area. Thus, theoretically, he was the "owner" ["pemilik"] of all the land in the kingdom, and each time new land was opened, his permission had to be obtained. 4

The liurai is the closest descendant of the previous liurai. In patrilineal groups, he is the oldest son, while in matrilineal groups, he is the son or male grandchild of the sister of the previous liurai. The liurai must hold firmly to adat, and must be just, honest, authoritative, brave, helpful, wise, and skillful. These conditions limit the authority of a ruler [raja] in order to prevent the possibility of despotism. 5 Liurais frequently have to relinquish their authority because they violated the above conditions, even though theoretically their term of office is for life. The dependence of people on the umapukun is more "spiritual", or of an "adat" nature. Additionally, as Parsudi Suparlan has said, 6 there also exists the custom of deliberations between the katuas and the other elders. These elders have their basis of authority in the ordinary members of the village whom they represent. Thus, the principle of egalitarianism already exists among them. However, the new deliberative institutions such as the LKMD [Village Community Resilience Institutues, common throughout rural Indonesia] appear not to make use of these institutions. As a result, backbiting-like symptoms frequently emerge among the members of society. These symptoms are a manifestation of dissatisfaction with the present mechanisms for deliberation.

### 4.3 The Portuguese Colonial Administrative System

As was already touched on above, the system of administration which the Portuguese government endeavored to establish largely focused on supra-village units, i.e., the posto (cheve de posto), the conchelo (almistrador), and the provincia (gubernador). This does not mean, however, that administration at the village level was completely free from contact with the Portuguese government. At the village level, the Portuguese government established the suco, with its leader the cheve de suco, and at a yet lower level, the povoacao, with its leader the cheve de povoacao. Hierarchically, therefore, the administrative system introduced by the Portuguese government was as shown in the table below.

**Figure 4.1. Hierarchical Structure of the Portuguese Colonial Administration in East Timor**

Territorial Unit - Leader

Provincia - Gubernador
Conchelo - Administrador/Almistrador
Posto - Cheve de Posto
Suco - Cheve de Suco
Povoacao - Cheve de Povoacao

Theoretically, a suco was not a kingdom [kerajaan], and the cheve de suco was not a king [raja]. In fact, however, many of the functions of the cheve de suco were in the hands of the liurai or dato, because in the past it was difficult for ordinary people (reino) to effect vertical social mobility. The primary duty of the cheve de suco and the cheve de povoacao was to assist the administrado de posto, i.e., by collecting taxes and registering inhabitants. The recompense received was as much as 3% of the suco and povoacao taxes collected.

Because fundamentally, the cheve de suco and cheve de povoacao were not traditional leaders, in practice they did not have the legitimacy of adat and society. Nevertheless, because many functions at the level of the suco and povoacao were held by the liurai, it was their status as liurai that made them accepted by their communities.

**4.4 The Present Administrative System**

After East Timor integrated with Indonesia, it can be said that there have been no significant transformations in the system of administration. The table below is an effort to compare the hierarchical structure of the (regional) government of East Timor during the Portuguese period and now.

**Figure 4.2. The Structure of Regional Government in East Timor under Portuguese Authority and Now**

| Portuguese | Now |
|---|---|
| Gubernador | Gubernur |
| Almistrador | Bupati |
| Cheve de Posto | Camat |
| Cheve de Suco | Kepala Desa |
| Cheve de Povoacao | Kepala Kampung |

During the period of Portuguese administration, the cheve de suco and the cheve de povoacao did not have significant administrative functions apart from collecting taxes and registering inhabitants. Because of this, their status can be said not to have caused significant problems, either for the government at that time or for themselves. Whereas now, besides having to meet various fixed requirements such as are included in Law No. 5/1979, a village headman [kepala desa] is also given rather complex assignments by the various ministries/departments that wish to run a number of village programs. This situation has made problematic the status of the liurai who have now been made village headmen. On the one hand, the liurai are still required to sit within the village political organization because of their charisma which is still acknowledged by the members of the society around them. On the other hand, they do not have various of the prerequisites for being a village headman that are required by Law No. 5/1979. This is because, in general, they do not have sufficient educational background to carry out the functions which they must perform, since the penetrative and exploitative Portuguese government did not give them the opportunity to develop. In the same villages today, there are plenty of local youth who have graduated from

middle school who are unemployed. They do have sufficient educational background to carry out the above administrative functions.

### 4.5 Religion

Viewed in terms of their spiritual lives, the people of East Timor today live in two "worlds" at once. One foot is in the church, and the other foot is in the umalulik. Both of these color their everyday lives. At the time of the maize harvest, for example, a group of kinsmen will feast together around the fatubosok near the umalulik. On another day, however, they will respectfully worship in the church. Furthermore, it is a common view that people visit the umalulik during the Catholic holidays, such as Christmas or Easter.

In 1980, the number of Catholics in East Timor was around 17%, and the majority of the others still followed their traditional ethnic religions. 7 Today, though, approximately 80% of the population of East Timor is Catholic. The rest are Protestants, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. These latter groups are relatively recent immigrants. At least two factors can be used to explain the huge jump in the number of Catholics in this area during the last ten years, i.e., the government's attitude toward the traditional religions, and the local people's fear of being branded a communist.

Up to the present, the government only recognizes the existence of five official religions in Indonesia. Religions outside the official religions are called "beliefs" ["kepercayaan"]. However, it can be said that in everyday life, there is no place [emphasis in original] for adherents of non-official religions to express their beliefs. In education in the schools, for example, there is a requirement to adhere to one of the official religions as one of the obligatory courses of study. So, too, in the resident identity cards [kartu tanda penduduk, or KTP] for adults. As a result, a two-faced attitude frequently appears among the members of society. If they do not want to include an official religion as part of their identity, they will be branded as having no religion. Having no religion is itself often interpreted as not believing in God (atheism), and atheism in Indonesia is almost always identified with communism. The upheavals in East Timor of the mid-1970's, which "ended" with the elimination of a political organization that called itself Fretilin and which followed a communist course, were also one reason for the entry of local people into the church, as only in this way could the local society psychologically feel safe.

#### 4.5.1. Traditional Religion

For a village society that is still simple, adat and religion cannot be separated from one another. Adat is tied to religion, and religion is tied to adat. The two are integrated into one system, which is called culture. This phenomenon is also seen in the village society of East Timor. Often an adat leader (umapukun) is also a religious leader, or lian nai.

In anthropology, there is a method by which to find out how many kinds of religious rituals there are in a society. This method is to make a list of the rituals which a person must go through in the course of his lifetime (life cycle rites), i.e., from the time he is in the womb of his mother until the days commemorating his death, along with the rituals related to the efforts of society to maintain the perpetuity of his life.

In East Timor, the life cycle rituals of the traditional religion begin one week after a baby is born (orsaian), and are followed by the haircutting ritual (koifuk), and then after death, by the rituals to release the soul (istilo) and to move the skeleton (korameta). In addition to these, they also perform rituals related to agriculture, such as asking permission from the guardian spirit of the land before opening a new garden, or at the time one wishes to begin to plant the maize (lagurai) or to pick the maize while it is still green (tunsele), as well as rituals for hanging up the maize (gelosele), and many others.

Basically, all of the above rituals are efforts to create a feeling of security. To abandon these rituals means to let oneself be attacked by some supernatural threat. This supernatural threat can appear in the form of illness, crop failure, or even death.

**4.5.2 The Church**

The fact that ultimately the majority of the population of East Timor today is Catholic has a long historical background with a number of important figures, among them the two missionaries who first set foot in Timor, Antonio Taveiro and Antonio da Cruz. These two missionaries succeeded in baptizing about 5,000 local people. On February 4, 1558, when the Diocese of Malacca was established, Timor was included in its jurisdiction. After that time, Timor became a fertile ground for the work of missionaries until 1595. However, the situation began to change when Portugal was attacked by the Dutch, and the first rebellions against the Portuguese occurred in the Solor Islands and Timor. At that time, a missionary was not only a religious leader but also a political and military leader, because he had to serve the sovereignty of the state. Only in 1701 was leadership of the church separated from other forms of administrative leadership. Even so, it was not until 1878 that an effort to improve the quality of life by building schools was undertaken by the missionaries, and even this was limited to the children of the liurai and of other important figures in society.

The arrival of the missionaries was at the same time as the arrival of Portuguese sailors and traders of pepper and sandalwood. The missionaries, though, established a closeness with the local populace all the way up to the hinterlands, and worked cooperatively with the important figures of local society. Eventually, the commercial goods like pepper and sandalwood which were traded began to diminish, and quarrels arose between the local inhabitants and the Portuguese traders. Apparently, the missionaries backed the local society, and the local people felt safe with them. After that, the sympathy of the local society for the missionaries and the church grew even stronger. The Catholic church in East Timor flourished and developed a special character. Priests are called the "representatives of God" in this world, who have the task of giving "illumination" and bringing salvation to the local society. Because of this, the priests have a special place in the hearts of the local people. 8

**4.5.3. Priests, Catechists, and Parishioners**

Catholicism in East Timor, like Catholicism in other areas, has a clear hierarchy of leadership, under the leadership of the Bishop, whose seat is in Dili. In carrying out his leadership tasks, the Bishop of Dili is assisted by 50 priests (pastors), 45 nuns, and 1,011 catechists. They all are spread

out over 23 parishes. If at this time, the total number of Catholics in East Timor is around 540,000, this means that one priest (pastor) must take care of more than 10,000 parishioners.

The tradition of the Catholic Church in East Timor is different from the tradition of the Catholic Church in western Indonesia, where it was developed by Dutch missionaries. This difference is primarily due to the fact that the cultures of seminary education in the two areas are quite different. As a result, the concept of faith [emphasis in original] which has developed in the societies of the two areas is also different. In East Timor, faith means belief in the work of salvation. While in other areas, such as in Java, for example, the concept of faith is broader than that. Faith is not only belief in the work of salvation, it also involves efforts to better life in this world. This difference also results in a difference of attitude in the context of pastor-parishioner relations. In East Timor, a priest is seen only as part of the work of salvation, such that he is considered a sacred figure. He is the representative of God on earth. Because of this, he cannot get involved in worldly affairs. For a priest to get involved in secular matters means pollution of the sacred qualities inherent in him. The experience of a priest in the parish of Maubisse provides an example. One day, the priest was seen by several of his parishioners hoeing a garden near the parish house in order to plant maize and red beans. Astonished, the parishioners who saw him asked, "Why are you hoeing?" Local astonishment increases even further when priests include worldly problems, such as cutting back on feasts and on the number of animals slaughtered during feasts, in their sermons during celebration of the Eucharist. Priests who were educated in the High Seminary in Flores do not wish to suddenly change their sermons into the kind which are commonly given in western Indonesia. They are afraid that if this is done, their parishioners will be shocked and will reject them. The priests believe that the effort to cut back on feasts and on the number of animals slaughtered during feasts is important because, according to them, one of the reasons for the low level of prosperity in the local society is that traditions like these are still flourishing. As one local resident said to a priest:

> "At the feast a while back, Pak Miguel slaughtered 60 water buffalo, and several pigs, goats, and chickens. This time, I am only going to slaughter 40 water buffalo".

This suggests that any changes which have taken place have been very minor.

Between the two different worlds, i.e., the sacred world and the profane (secular) world, there is an institution which bridges the two. This institution is the religion school, led by a figure who is usually called a catechist. The catechist is considered by the society around him to know a lot about religious norms. Because of this, the local society also considers that his words and actions are always in accordance with religious norms, such that his behavior becomes a reference point for the members of society around him. Compared to the priest, the catechist has a relatively closer relationship to the members of society around him, since fundamentally he is an "ordinary" member of society.

According to a catechist who used to work in the village of Maubisse, the members of society who attend the catechist's religion classes are usually from the gentio (read: sentiu), i.e., the people who have not yet been baptized. They attend the religion classes as preparation for becoming a

Catholic. However, since today "all" of the residents are already Catholic, those who attend the catechist's religion classes are those members of society who feel inexpert in matters of Catholic religion, even though they may already have been baptized. When they give religious instruction in Church, the catechists usually only present religious (liturgical) texts, such as are written in the Bible. Outside of these occasions, however, in accordance with the policies of the parish priests, they also join in efforts to promote the development of the local society, such as joining in prohibiting feasts that involve the slaughter of many animals, and in prohibiting public drunkenness.

According to village records, their efforts in this regard have been successful. If compared with the situation three or four years ago, the number of people found drunk in public places has decreased. So, too, with the number of animals slaughtered during feasts. Today, for the ceremony of placing flowers on the grave, or karefuna, for example, many families now feel that slaughtering one water buffalo and one goat is sufficient.

Another set of figures considered by Catholics in East Timorese villages to have an important status and role are the godparents. Materially, the godfather and godmother rarely assist their godchildren. Nevertheless, in everyday life, they appear to have emotional and spiritual ties that are stronger than the ties between a child and his natal parents. Whenever a child faces serious problems, he will tell his godfather or godmother.

Catholics in other regions usually take the name of a saint as a sign that they have been baptized. Not so in East Timor, where the name that is taken as a baptismal name is the name of the godfather or godmother. As a result, if one encounters two or more people with the same last name, it is possible that they also have the same godparents.

Two or more people who have the same godfather or godmother are spiritual siblings, and as the people of East Timor consider spiritual ties to be higher than worldly ties, the relations between spiritual siblings are also more highly valued than the ties between natal siblings. As an example, one day Carlos (not his real name) encountered two of his siblings who both needed a certain amount of money. The money which Carlos had was only enough to meet the needs of one of his siblings. It turned out that Carlos was happier to lend his money to his spiritual sibling than to his biological sibling. The relations between a child and his parents are not far different. The incident described below is an example. One day, this researcher was invited to attend a party by a member of the DPRD for the Regency (Kabupaten) of Ainaro. It turned out that he was celebrating the birthday of one of his children, who was six years old. At the party, one of the activities was for the child concerned to cut the birthday cake. When it came time to cut the cake, it turned out that the first piece of cake was given not to his own parents, but to his godmother.

### 4.6. The Sociocultural System

In East Timor, cooperation among relatives is an important element of people's lives. Without such cooperation, it is hard to imagine how an adat ceremony, such as the istilo or korameta, could take place. Take, for example, the village of Lihu, in the subdistrict (kecamatan) of Railako, regency (kabupaten) of Ermera. An adat leader called the temukung, named Dominggo (not his real name), wanted to hold an istilo (the ritual to release the ancestral spirit) for his brother who

died in the turmoil that claimed 22 adults and 63 children. The process of preparing to hold this ceremony took quite a long time. First, Dominggo gathered together all his sons- and daughters-in-law, and all the sons- and daughters-in-law of his brother. In all, there were 26 people, but only 10 of them were able to attend. On this occasion, they were required to open a new field for planting maize. After planting the maize, they each returned to their homes. Three months later, when the maize was ready to harvest, they were required to assemble again to hold a meeting with other relatives in order to determine the duties involved in the istilo. At this meeting, Dominggo gave orders to his sons- and daughters-in-law by dividing up maize kernels from the harvest of the above-mentioned garden. These maize kernels had a set value. One maize kernel was worth one water buffalo or cow, five goats, and Rp. 200,000 in cash. So if someone got two maize kernels, this meant they had to bring two water buffaloes, ten goats, and Rp. 400,000 to the istilo.

After the dividing up of the maize kernels, all the sons- and daughters-in-law returned home to fulfill their obligations. Meanwhile, in his own house, Dominggo began the preparations for the ceremony by making all the necessary arrangements: constructing a house for the famila to sleep in, a house in which to put the livestock and other items, and a tent for the invited guests, as well as buying implements for the feast, such as spoons, plates, glasses, and so forth. After the preparations were finished, all the sons- and daughters-in-law were summoned again, in order to be told the day and date of the ceremony. The time for the ceremony was coordinated with the readiness of the sons- and daughters-in-law to carry out their obligations. About a week before the ceremony, the famila had already begun to arrive at the site of the ceremony. By the date of the ceremony, the number of assembled relatives totalled about 350 persons, not including neighbors or invited guests. Sometimes the famila who arrived also brought gifts for the household head, in the form of livestock, drinks, or food. At the time of the ceremony, the number of livestock accumulated totalled 18 water buffaloes or cows, 28 goats, and 80 pigs. The feast itself required two cows, one water buffalo, three pigs and two goats to be slaughtered. The invited guests were lavishly entertained. Drinks like whiskey flowed without end. Five drums of tuak (palm wine) and four drums of beer were consumed. People nearby who were not invited also enjoyed the istilo by watching the attractions which were presented and by participating in the dances at night. There were also many people from outside the subdistrict (kecamatan) who attended. Food and drinks were also served here. After the feast was over, several families stayed on to help put the house in order. The sons- and daughters-in-law who had brought one water buffalo or cow went home with two pigs. Reciprocal exchanges of the livestock brought by the sons- and daughters-in-law was one of the duties of the feast's organizer. If, at that time, one of the household heads was not able to contribute livestock, he had to promise when he would give the livestock, and that promise had to be fulfilled.

The total time from the first gathering of the sons- and daughters-in-law to plant the field until the actual occurence of the feast was about one year. The money which Dominggo spent on the istilo totalled about Rp. 3,000,000, including a Rp. 640,000 government tax. This total does not include the value of the livestock brought by his famila.

In order to curtail feasts like this, the regency government of Ermera (Pemerintah Kabupaten Daerah Tingkat II Ermera) issued a regulation levying a tax on families holding adat ceremonies which are considered large-scale by local standards. For a korameta, istilo, or umalulik, the tax is

Rp. 500,000; for berlaki or belis, as much as Rp. 30,000; for penanaman salib, the tax is Rp. 25,000. The animals slaughtered are also taxed; water buffalo are Rp. 35,000 per head, cows Rp. 25,000, pigs Rp. 15,000, and goats Rp. 5,000.

The largest and most expensive rituals are the korameta, istilo, and the dedication (peresmian) of the umalulik. The essence of the korameta and istilo are actually the same, i.e., a ceremony to release the ancestral spirit to another world. The difference is that the korameta is held by Catholics, and the istilo by followers of the lulik religion or animism.

The regency government of Ermera considers the above-mentioned ceremonies to be wasteful. In connection with this, they issued a regulation prohibiting residents from holding korameta, istilo, or umalulik for a period of five years beginning January 1, 1990. Residents who violate this regulation will be fined Rp. 2.5 million. This regulation from the regent (bupati) has gotten both positive and negative reactions from society. Members of society who do not wish to accept the above regulation argue that adat ceremonies are a means to develop kinship ties -- so that kinsmen can get to know one another. If the members of a kinship group do not know one another, there will be problems, because there will be marriages between relatives or between members of the same famila. This, moreover, is something which is contrary to both adat and religious norms. On the other hand, the groups that agree with the regent's regulation often see a negative impact of holding such ceremonies, in the form of gambling, drunkenness, sexual transgressions, fights, and even murder.

**4.6.1. The Kinship System**

The society of East Timor recognizes two principles of lineal descent, i.e., through the descent line of the father (patrilineal), which is the dominant principle, and through the descent line of the mother (matrilineal). In their view, these two lineal descent principles are brought about, among other factors, by the existence of a rule establishing that the patrilineal principle will be altered if the family of the man is not able to pay the bridewealth (belis, berlaki) requested by the family of the woman. Furthermore, if this should occur, the groom is required to live in his wife's family's residence. The point of this is so that the groom will work in his wife's family's household until they consider his accumulated labor to have the same value as the bridewealth he would have had to pay. 9

The largest kinship unit is the clan. A clan is symbolized by the possession of an umalulik. The members of a clan are spread out into smaller kinship groups called fuan in Tetum. Each fuan lives in a community called an uma. An uma generally consists of no more than ten houses.

The people of East Timor divide kinship groups into two halves (phratries), i.e., the fetosa and the umane. These two terms are linked to the principle of exogamy in their marriage system. The fetosa are the kinship groups which are the wife- takers, and the umane are the wife-givers. This subject will be explained in greater detail below.

**4.7. The Status and Role of Women**

A description of women's roles in the villages of East Timor cannot be divorced from an explanation of the culture of the local society, especially from the time a woman gets married. From this, we can see where the local society places women in relation to the other members of society (men).

In the matter of finding lifelong partners, the village society of East Timor follows the principle of clan exogamy, meaning that marriages must take place between people outside the circle of their clans. To this end, the local society divides clans into two groups, i.e., wife-giving clans (fetosa) and wife-taking clans (umane). A clan can act as fetosa for one particular clan but at the same time become umane for another clan.

In order to get a wife or to arrange a marriage, the groom's family has to pay the amount of bridewealth (belis, berlaki) requested by the bride's family. This belis is usually in the form of livestock, such as cows, water buffalo, goats, sheep, horses, and pigs, in the amount of tens or even hundreds of animals. The function of this bridewealth is as an exchange for the loss to the woman's family for all of the expenses occurred in raising and taking care of her as a girl, plus the loss of her labor to the wife-giving clan. Thus, once the groom's family has paid the belis requested by the bride's family, full rights to the woman are in the groom's hands.

Determining the size of the belis is not an absolute matter. In other words, if the groom's family feels overburdened by the bridewealth requested by the bride's family, the groom can negotiate for the amount to be lowered until an agreement is reached. Even so, it not infrequently happens that the groom still is not able to pay the bridewealth asked by the woman. In this event, the solution usually arrived at is that the groom must work for the bride's family for a certain length of time. The above phenomenon suggests that the value of a woman is quite high.

After the wedding ceremony is over, the belis obtained by the woman is distributed to her relatives by the nai, or her mother's brother. The kinsmen or famila who have received a share of the belis must prepare to contribute when one of the members of their famila becomes a wife-taker (giver of bridewealth). From this, it can be seen that possession of livestock in East Timor is highly social. Livestock are not solely the possession of a nuclear family, but belong to an extended family (uma) or even an umalulik. From this, the status of women in this society is clear. Without the presence of women, it is very difficult for a family to obtain a large amount of livestock to use later to pay the bridewealth for their sons. Because of this, the respect which a son in a family has for his sisters often seems higher than that which he has for his brothers.

After marriage, a woman becomes "fully" the right of her husband. She must do everything ordered by her husband, such as doing housework (washing clothes, cooking, taking care of the children), along with supplementing the family income, whether by working in the fields, selling garden produce, or by making various handicrafts such as woven cloths (tais), baskets for storing corn or rice (luhu or bote), or mats made out of lontar leaves (biti).

Presented below is a table of the division of labor between men and women in the gardens and in the rice fields [sawah - sic] for several stages of labor in the system of coffee-growing.

**Table 4.1: Division of Labor Between Men and Women in the Gardens and in the Rice Fields**

Gender: Male - Female

Type of Labor:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Clearing field | XX | ---- |
| Planting | ---- | XX |
| Weeding | X | XX |
| Harvesting | X | XX |
| Preparing the land after harvest for replanting | XX | XX |

Key: ---- : Not at all involved
X : Somewhat involved
XX : Has a major role

From the above table, it can be seen that from the time of preparing the land for planting, through planting, weeding, and harvesting, the role of women is greater than that of men. In connection with this, it would seem that women should also participate in the agricultural extension programs which up until now have been primarily aimed at men, since, in a number of stages of farming, especially coffee-growing, the role of women is well recognized. The situation is no different for the cultivation of food and horticultural crops. On a day-to-day basis, women appear to spend more of their time tending the gardens than do men.

The heavy burden which women must carry seems to accord with the figures regarding population registration, as can be seen in the table below.

**Table 4.2. Composition of the Population of East Timor by Gender for the Years 1936, 1960, 1965, 1973, 1987**

| Year | Males | % | Females | % | Total | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1936 | 245,538 | 52.9 | 218,458 | 47.1 | 463,996 | 100 |
| 1960 | 267,783 | 51.9 | 248,293 | 48.1 | 516,076 | 100 |
| 1965 | 291,327 | 52.4 | 264,396 | 47.6 | 555,723 | 100 |
| 1973 | 329,946 | 52.7 | 296,600 | 47.3 | 626,546 | 100 |
| 1987 | 331,703 | 50.5 | 325,708 | 49.5 | 657,411 | 100 |

Sources: Budhisantosa (1980: 5)
Parsudi Suparlan (1980: 40-41)
Timor Timur dalam Angka 1987

Nevertheless, the total number of adult women in 1987 was greater than the number of men, i.e., 191,697 compared to 198,117. One reason for this is the turbulence which occurred in the middle 1970's. During this period, many adult men had to go to the "battlefield" and were killed in the political upheavals, which resulted in women having to do double work, both as housewives and as the primary breadwinners for their families. Several of the villages studied were reported by the camat (subdistrict head) as villages with many widows whose husbands had died during the political upheavals.

**4.8. Education**

The level of education during the Portuguese colonial period began with four years of elementary education (Escola Primaria). The next level was two years of Junior High School (Ciclo Preparatorio), followed by three years of High School (Secundario). Before going on to Higher Education, one also had to go through a Pre-University course for two years (Sestura Setimuanu). After passing this last level, students could each choose the course of study they wanted at the University, which was located only in Portugal.

Other educational facilities included the Catholic Middle Seminary, a five-year Technical School (Escola Industria e Commercial), and a four-year Teacher Training School.

During the Portuguese colonial period, a person would be praised by the people around him if he completed the Secundario level. This was because of the limited number of Secundario graduates, and the fact that only those with intellectual ability would be able to complete this level. These usually consisted of people with high social status, such as the Portuguese, the Mestizos, or children of the privileged classes.

The period following integration has been marked by the assimilation of the curriculum to that which applies to all the provinces of Indonesia. Both in terms of quality and quantity, education is still far from what is hoped. At the present time, it can be said that not all school-age children have yet been able to experience primary education. This can be seen from one area of research. The following table should make this clear.

**Table 4.3 Recapitulation of Data for Children Aged 7-12 (October 1988)**

| Village | Attending School | Quit School | Not Attending School | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aituto | 294 | 14 | 50 | 358 |
| Edi | 115 | 4 | 60 | 179 |
| Fatubisse | 83 | 8 | 56 | 147 |
| Horaikik | 372 | 16 | 48 | 436 |
| Liurai | 84 | 6 | 58 | 148 |
| Manelobas | 56 | -- | 64 | 120 |
| Manetu | 128 | 10 | 54 | 192 |
| Maulau | 199 | 25 | 29 | 253 |
| Maubisse | 631 | 4 | 60 | 695 |
| Total | 1,962 | 87 | 579 | 2,628 |

Source: Subdistrict Office (Kantor Kecamatan) of Maubisse.

The development which has taken place recently has indicated apathetic tendencies among school children towards aspects of education. Students feel like 'giving up' whenever they do not see a link between the purpose of the knowledge they are receiving and their destiny in the future. The large number of school-age children who have not had the chance to experience a primary education is in part caused by conditions in the family environment which are unsupportive of the process of learning and teaching.

The low level of education in the villages of East Timor is caused, among other factors, first, by the insufficient socio-economic condition of society, resulting in a decline in the quality of life for its members. Health factors have been neglected as a result of a decrease in the calories vitally needed by the body. Automatically, children become weak and listless, and even their concentration is impaired. In this context, children will experience difficulty in following lessons and will not make progress in their studies. Second, an unprofitable socio-economic situation forces parents to meet the basic needs of their family, so that they neglect the education of their children. Moreover, apathy sometimes begins here, where parents give the impression of prohibiting their children from attending school because of the labor needs of the family. Evidently, up until now, parents have not yet seen the fruits of education. An interesting case took place in one village, in a primary school which could accomodate as many as 100 pupils, but which was always attended by only half of them. It turned out that the students cut school because they were tending livestock, or else they cut to go play in the marketplace. On the basis of an agreement between the village authorities and local teachers, a regulation was quickly put into effect, prohibiting children from "cutting" school, and with the further sanction of a fine of up to Rp. 100,000 if the parents of these children decided to stop the school activities of their children. Apparently, though, this sanction was not heavy enough, because if the parents wished, they would pay the fine so that their children did not have to go to school any longer. The situation of education in the region of East Timor is

indeed a dilemma which requires its own unique solution in light of the various aspects of life that color it. Overcoming the situation of education in the rural areas is a task which is not easy, because its problems are so complex.

**4.8.1. Adolescents in East Timor**

In time, adolescents or youth are the people who will replace the older generation in the future. In this context, what is required is a kind of directed freedom in self-development, because one's outlook and aspirations for the future are formed early on. In general, it can be said that the intellectual and spiritual development during adolescence constitutes a natural process directed towards the future. The socialization process received from one's surroundings will produce a unique sensitivity to everything that happens in one's society.

Anxiety towards imagining the future often becomes a burden on the thinking of those who are no longer able to continue their education or to find employment opportunities. The need to acknowledge their existence takes a form which cannot be ignored just like that. The restlessness which shackles their souls is the backdrop for a number of behaviors that desire expression. Various yardsticks for measuring the patterns of adolescent behavior refer to concrete actions which are the result of the spelling out of their thoughts.

In the book, Youth and Social Change (Pemuda dan Perubahan Sosial), 10 Taufik Abdullah notes that the younger generation is directly involved in every change in society. Usually, they are part of the educated class, where they have had the chance to savor a sufficient education. Even though their total number is relatively small, nevertheless they often have a deep sensitivity and a reactive attitude towards the arbitrariness experienced by their society.

The student group is the group which will spearhead the period of transition, or the shift from childhood to becoming adults. Here, it is apparent that conditions in their environment form a unique mode of socialization for them.

Recently, it is evident that the forms of resistance launched by the student groups domiciled in the city have become more conspicuous. At first glance, no significant differences are noticeable within the educated group between those who are still studying and the graduates who have not yet found work.

At the same time, in a covert way, they have divided or differentiated into two forces according to their place of origin (sector). There are several distinguishing factors which they consider as distinctive features of their groups.

A general picture of society reflects the existence of several conspicuous characteristics of disposition, language, style of dress, and even behavior in everyday life, which distinguish those who come from the western and eastern sectors. So, too, with the adolescent groups, who are covertly divided into two sectors, West and East. The nickname given to those who come from the western sector is keladi (meaning "rustics"), while those from the eastern sector are called ficaro (meaning "easterners"). In terms of language, there is a differentiation between the Tetun language

common to the Western sector and the Makasae language (meaning "language of the East"). In terms of identification, language, as well as behavior, is enough to be able to tell the origins of the two groups. An even more conspicuous characteristic is pointed out by those who come from the eastern sector, namely, being braver, not being afraid of death, and, if necessary, defending their friends to the last drop of blood. The nature of the unity of their group is very strong; this is due to having "one force", which is mythologized by "drinking blood" as their unifying symbol. One thing which is firmly rooted in those who come from the East is a lack of fear towards all kinds of threats, including a lack of fear towards the army. An incident occurred where a group of students was captured by the army and, needless to say, was not spared such military "lessons" as having their heads submerged in water, beatings, and being kicked with boots. Nevertheless, all this did not diminish their spirit. To them, physical torture felt far lighter than the shackling of their souls because of some system.

Military pressure on the student groups is symptomatic of their psychological imprisonment in a zone of movement which is always limited and controlled. If this pressure accumulates, it is not surprising that a "form of resistance" arises as a way of asserting their existence. Given the intellectual capital and strength of this group, along with the basics of an education in practical politics as a process of socialization, it is not out of the question that some form of stress will emerge. This can, in fact, be seen as a barometer for the level of social sensitivity in East Timor.

When we talk about the problem of students and youth, we cannot lose sight of the external factors that encompass them. Harmony in one's life, along with a certain amount of ease as the product of development, is not something which can just like that give their lives more well-being. Apparently, the desire to be free from the "shackles of colonialism" is something which they absolutely must carry out. It is precisely here that the problem lies, in that the failure of the system of colonialism cannot be something which will be repeated with the arrival of a new colonizer and a new model of colonialism.

**4.9. Conclusion**

Agricultural land is usually worked collectively by a group of kinsmen who live in an uma, i.e., a group of houses which consist of several nuclear families that all have kinship ties with each other. In an uma, there is usually at least one leader called a katuas. In the traditional deliberative institutions, the katuas were usually given authority by the members of the uma, who were none other than their own relatives. Thus, in the "new" deliberative institutions, i.e., the LKMD, they should also be included, along with the other traditional leaders, such as the liurai, the umapukun, and the dato.

In village political organization, the charismatic figures are the liurai. Because of this, the village head is best chosen from among them. The level of education of the liurai is indeed usually low, so that it is not possible for them to complete complex and heavy administrative tasks. Such tasks can be delegated to the PPL [common "supervisory and protection" official in Indonesia] assigned to the village or to local youth who have completed a middle-school education.

Other figures who have a place in the hearts of the members of village society are the priest and the catechist. In the Catholic churches of East Timor, it is considered taboo for priests to interfere in worldly affairs, including the problems of development. In connection with this, it is difficult to place them in official government institutions like the LKMD, as this would only put them in a problematic position. Nevertheless, the commitment of the priests (the church) to always "take the side of the oppressed" shows that their voice must always be attended to by the government. This means that the function of the church as an institution of social control [sic] must be preserved. It is different for the catechists; they are usually drawn from ordinary members of society. However, because their knowledge in the field of religion is so much more extensive than that of the other members of society, their ideas and behaviors are followed by the people around them. On this basis, they should also be incorporated in the LKMD.

Officially, it is stated that about 80% of the population of East Timor is Catholic. Nevertheless, ideas and practices of "traditional religion" ("agama asli") still heavily color aspects of the life of society in the form of various sorts of rituals. These rituals have a very broad function and purpose. As was found in the Subdistrict of Railako, Regency of Ermera, such rituals are also an effort to strengthen kinship ties. If ceremonies like these are not carried out, many members of society worry that incest or marriages between close relatives which are prohibited by adat and religion will occur. Religious ceremonies are part of the "communication system" of society. On this basis, what should be done is to not make local regulations which clearly are in conflict with the local cultural system as was done by the Second Level Regional Government of the Regency of Ermera. Such religious rituals will still take place, even if people have to pay a fine as high as Rp. 2.5 million. Related to this regulation, it is also feared that the local regulations prohibiting feasts will not make the society more prosperous, as the government hoped, but just the opposite. People will still choose to hold feasts, even if they have to pay a fine.

Compared to men, women in the villages of East Timor apparently spend more of their time working in the gardens than do men. This pattern of the division of labor is linked to the bridewealth received by the woman's family. Because of this, women should also be included in agricultural extension programs as part of the activities of the PKK [quasi-official Family Welfare Guidance, widespread throughout Indonesia].

Education is a key factor in increasing the prosperity of society. Nevertheless, the effort to improve education itself still encounters many obstacles or constraints, such as the emergence of a dilemma between the utility of the knowledge obtained by a pupil and the anxiety of imagining his fate in the future. In connection with this, it seems that an educational program oriented to the development of local resources would be able to address this problem.

1. Lapian and Paramitha, "Sejarah Timor Timur", in Berita Antropologi, No. 11, 1980, p. 26.

2. PPSPK UGM, Struktur, Kultur dan Birokrasi Formal di Timor Timur, Yogyakarta, 1980.

3. Among the Tetum, besides the katuas, there is also the bahen mahebu as the leader of the lineage, the bahen as the leader of the uma, and the uma ulun as the leader of the uma cnua (Parsudi Suparlan, 1980: 59).

4. PPSPK, loc. cit: 23-27.

5. PPSPK UGM, Menentukan Identitas Desa di Timor Timur: Suatu Studi Socio Kultural, Yogyakarta, 1980, pages 125-126.

6. PPSPK UGM, ibid.

7. Parsudi Suparlan, loc. cit.: 59.

8. Budhisantoso, "Lingkungan Alam dan Potensi Penduduk di Timor Timur," and Parsudi Suparlan, "Orang Timor Timur," in Berita Anthropologi, No. XI, 1980.

9. "Sejarah Misi di Timor Timur", Hidup, Nos. 30/31, July 1988. Jakarta: PT Gramedia.

10. Parsudi Suparlan, loc. cit.: 48.

11. Taufik Abdullah, ed., Pemuda dan Perubahan Sosial, Jakarta, LP3ES, 1974.

---

**Indonesia News Service** is an Indonesia Publications periodical appearing one to three times a week. **Editor** - John A. MacDougall. **Contributing Editors**: Al-Ghozie Usman, Arjuna, Hedvig Brorsson, Budidarma, Peter Burns, Kartini, Tim Kell, Khrisna, Daniel Limawan, Like Lokon, Nancy Lutz, W. Donald McTaggart, Hanawati Morris, June Santosa, Richard Walter. **Technical Assistant**: Dani Suleman. Prepaid annual subscription rates for 104 issues are $227 in the U.S. and Canada and $298 elsewhere. **Indonesia News Service** may be freely quoted, but any reproduction of a significant portion of its contents should have the prior written agreement of the editor. Address all correspondence to Indonesia Publications, 7538 Newberry Lane, Lanham-Seabrook, Maryland 20706, U.S.A. Telephone: (301) 552-3251. Fax: (301) 552-4465. E-mail: 72436.3621 (CompuServe) or apakabar (PeaceNet).

---